

Washburn-Crosby Milling Complex,
Washburn "A" Mill
North Division - 701-709 South First Street
South Division - 700-706 South Second Street
Minneapolis
Hennepin County
Minnesota

HABS No. MN-69-A

HABS
MINN,
27-MINAP,
20-4-

DRAWINGS

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

HABS
MINN,
27- MINAP,
20-A-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WASHBURN-CROSBY MILLING COMPLEX,
WASHBURN "A" MILL

HABS No. MN-69-A

Location: North Division - 701-709 South First Street,
South Division - 700-706 South Second Street,
Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota.

USGS Minneapolis South Quadrangle, Universal
Transverse Mercator Coordinates: Zone 15;
479740:4980480; 479860:4980420; 479820:4980360;
479700:4980400

Present Owner: Riverside Industries, Inc.
P.O. Box 1125
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55440

Present Occupant: Riverside Industries, Inc.

Present Use: Storage.

Significance: The Washburn "A" Mill is the only structure
remaining from the original Minneapolis milling
complex established by Cadwallader C. Washburn in
the 1870's. As such it is the most significant
link between the Washburn-Crosby Milling Company
of the 19th century and the vast operations of
the present-day General Mills. The Washburn "A"
Mill was erected originally in 1874 and rebuilt
in 1879-80. It was equipped in the beginning
exactly as the now-demolished Washburn "C" Mill.
The Washburn "A" Mill recalls the structure's
role as the nation's first automatic, all-roller,
gradual reduction mill.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of erection: 1878-1880 (Source: Warner, History of Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis).
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners:
 - 1879 Washburn, Crosby and Co. partnership formed.
 - 1889 Washburn, Crosby Co., Inc., was incorporated.
 - 1899 William H. Dunwoody purchased the major part of the Washburn shares of stock.

1928 General Mills, Inc., formed a holding company that took over the ownership of Washburn, Crosby, Co., Inc.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The 1880 Washburn "A" Mill was built by the Washburn, Crosby Co. using George McMullen as stone mason and company mill workers as construction workers.
5. Original plans and construction: Not available.
6. Alterations and additions: On September 16, 1928, a fire damaged much of the South Division of the Washburn "A" Mill, including the 7th story monitor and cupola. Pike & Cook Co. did the demolition of the damaged areas of the mill (Permit #I3010, cost \$9,000) as well as the reconstruction. A reinforced-concrete foundation was installed for rebuilding the South Division (Permit #19203, cost \$10,000), the 1st through 4th floors were rebuilt of reinforced-concrete while the 5th through 8th floors were rebuilt in wood post and beam mill construction (Permit #A19279, cost \$10,000 and Permit #A19178, cost \$90,000). A fireproof steel and tile stairway was installed from the 1st to the 7th floors on the south fire wall of the North Division (Permit #A19285, cost \$7,500). The south facade was rebuilt of brick faced reinforced-concrete construction incorporating the original stone from the base to the 3rd floor (Permit #A19426, cost \$30,000).

- B. Historical Context: See HABS No. MN-69 for general information.

The Washburn "A" Mill is the only structure remaining from the original Minneapolis milling complex established by Cadwallader C. Washburn in the 1870's. As such it is the most significant link between the Washburn-Crosby Milling Company of the 19th century and the vast operations of the present-day General Mills. The Washburn "A" Mill was erected originally in 1874 and rebuilt in 1879-80. It was equipped in the beginning exactly as the now-demolished Washburn "C" Mill. The Washburn "A" Mill recalls the structure's role as the nation's first automatic, all-roller, gradual reduction mill.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Washburn "A" Mill is a seven-story building with a one-story, 3 bay wide raised monitor, built of rock faced limestone. The south portion of the original 1880 structure was damaged by fire in 1928 and rebuilt with a concrete structural system and brick facade. The building presents an imposing riverfront facade, a product of late 19th-century industrial architecture. Built of local Platteville limestone and heavy timber post and beam construction, it incorporated materials and structural systems that may never be used again.
2. Condition of fabric: The Washburn "A" Mill appears to be structurally sound and its exterior fabric is in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The Washburn "A" Mill is located between First and Second Streets South on portions of Lots 8, 9, 10, and 14, Sub. No. 39, Minneapolis. The combined dimensions are 100' x 244'.

The mill is divided into the North Division (80') and South Division (106'), separated by an interior rail trackway and brick fire wall. The North Division is 7 bays wide and has 8 floors, with a one-story raised monitor. The South Division is 7 bays wide and has 9 floors with the 1st and 2nd being a basement and sub-basement.

2. Foundations: Five foot thick limestone footings support the structure.
3. Walls:
 - a. North elevation: The north facade has 8 stories with a monitor. It is a bearing wall of rock-faced limestone with 8 windows on each of the first 6 floors and 4 across the monitor level. Each window is spanned by a stone segmental arch.
 - b. South elevation: The south facade has 7 stories. This wall was rebuilt after the fire in 1928. The first 3 floors are the original limestone construction, which continues partially into the 4th and 5th levels as a covering for the concrete construction. Above the 5th level the facade is of brick with window openings that are large rectangular window walls between columns. The rebuilt facade is 7 bays wide.

WASHBURN-CROSBY MILLING COMPLEX,
WASHBURN "A" MILL
HABS No. MN-69-A (Page 4)

- c. East elevation: The east facade is mostly party wall with the adjacent Wheathouse and Wheelhouse buildings and is penetrated by a trackway and various conveyors.
 - d. West elevation: The west facade shares a party wall with the adjacent annex of the Utility building on the South Division portion. Attached to the North Division portion is the three story Mill Office, Pump Room and West Engine House. The visible portion of the "A" Mill facade above these buildings is of the same limestone construction as the north facade and has the same fenestration.
- 4. Structural system, framing: The North Division has load bearing stone walls with a heavy timber post and beam structural system and wood floors. The rebuilt South Division has reinforced concrete columns and floors.
 - 5. Awnings: A corrugated steel awning runs across the south facade at the second story over a loading dock.
 - 6. Plaque over door: A 2-1/2' x 4' marble plaque is located above the main door on the north elevation, with the inscription:

"This mill was erected in the year 1879 on the site of Washburn "A" which was totally destroyed on the second day of May 1878, by fire, and a terrific explosion occasioned by the rapid combustion of flour dust. Not one stone was left upon another, and every person engaged in the mill instantly lost his life. The following are the names of the faithful and well tried employees who fell victims of that awful calamity. Viz. E.W. Burbank, Cyrus W. Ewing, E.H. Grundman, Henry Hicks, Chas. Henning, Patrick Judd, Chas. Kimball, WM. Leslie, Fred. A. Merrill, Edwd. E. Merrill, Walter Savage, Ole Shie, August Smith, Clark Wilbur."

"Labor, wide as the earth, has its
summit in heaven."

- 7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The north facade has a one-story segmented arch doorway at street level. There are other various doors to the adjacent buildings and loading dock.
 - b. Windows: Mostly wood 2/2 hinged windows set in segmental arched openings in the North Division, although photos show the original windows to be double hung wood sash 6/6 windows. There are steel-framed glass walls in the South Division.

WASHBURN-CROSBY MILLING COMPLEX,
WASHBURN "A" MILL
HABS No. MN-69-A (Page 5)

8. Roof: On the North Division the monitor and sixth floor have a low pitch. The South Division has a flat built-up asphalt roof.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

- a. Typical plan: The building is divided into North and South Divisions by a brick fire wall. Both sections are a uniform open-grid plan with the North Division being 7 bays wide and 7 bays deep and the South Division being 7 bays wide and 11 bays deep. Floors 4 through 7 are divided east and west by storage bins that run through the 5th through 7th floors with a concrete substructure on the 4th floor which supports the bins (South Division only).

2. Stairways: There are two fire stairwells which are additions to the original structure, and, aside from the freight elevator, are the only means of vertical access. They were supplemented at one time by two man-lifts which are now boarded up.

3. Flooring: The first three floors in the South Division consist of concrete slabs. The eighth floor of the South Division is concrete planks. All other floors are of 1" thick maple plank.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The interior of the exterior walls are primarily exposed limestone with some areas being plastered and/or whitewashed. The entire structural system is exposed.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways: All openings in the fire wall are sliding metal fire doors.

6. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating: It is a hot water system with radiators on each floor.
- b. Lighting: Explosion-proof bulbs (a light bulb inside of a thick jar-like fixture) used throughout the building.
- c. Plumbing: Unknown.

D. List of Milling Equipment:

See individual floor plans.

E. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The Washburn "A" Mill was built as the principal building in the Washburn-Crosby Milling Complex. The main facade faces northeast and the Mississippi River. Originally there was a row of mill buildings between the "A" Mill and the river, creating Canal Street which is now called 1st Street South. These mills have all been demolished and mounds of gravel obscure the view of the river. Behind the "A" Mill runs 2nd Street South and now defunct railway lines of the Milwaukee and St. Paul and Minneapolis and St. Louis Railroads. The site rises in elevation from the river side. The building can be approached from either the north or south side, the main entry being to the north on 1st Street South.
2. Other buildings in the complex:
 - a. Humboldt Mill (1878).
 - b. Mill Office (1880).
 - c. Wheat House (1881).
 - d. West Engine House (1885).
 - e. No. 1 Elevator (1906-1908).
 - f. Wheel House (1911).
 - g. Utility Building (1914).
 - h. Feed Elevator (1928).
 - i. East Engine House (1894).

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Panorama Views: The earliest views of the Washburn "A" Mill are found on three panoramic maps of the west side of the Mississippi River located in the Map Library of the Minnesota Historical Society. These panoramic maps, dated 1866, 1867, and 1879 respectively, show the original buildings in the complex.
- B. Photographs: Several photographs showing general views of the Washburn "A" Mill were found in the Audio-visual collection of the Minnesota Historical Society. Other photographs of the "A" Mill were found in the History collection at the Minneapolis Public Library.

WASHBURN-CROSBY MILLING COMPLEX,
WASHBURN "A" MILL
HABS No. MN-69-A (Page 7)

- C. Maps: A series of maps beginning with 1885 and ending with 1949, show explicitly the details of the Washburn-Crosby Milling Complex at seven different points in time.
- D. Building Permits/Historical Articles: The building permits recorded at the Inspector of Buildings Department in Minneapolis, Minnesota are from 1891 to 1961. The permit listings include sections of the complex other than just the Washburn "A" Mill. Historical articles appear in the St. Paul Pioneer Press and books at the Minneapolis Public Library.
- E. Bibliography:

- 1. Books:

Anfinson, Scott. Archeological Potential on the West Side of the Central Minneapolis-Waterfront. St. Paul; Minnesota Historical Society, 1984.

Berman, James. St. Anthony Falls Rediscovered. Riverfront Development Coordination Board, City of Minneapolis, 1980.

Bezant, Barb and Alan K. Lathrop. Drafting a House History. Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1979.

Bromley, E.A. Portrait of the Past. Minneapolis: Voyageur Press, 1973.

Bullock, Orin. The Restoration Manual. Norwalk, Connecticut: Silvermine Publishers, 1966.

Edgar, William. Medal of Gold. Minneapolis Public Library, 338.4 E23.

Fitch, James. Historic Preservation: Cultural Management of the Built World. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982.

Gray, James. Business Without Boundary: The Story of General Mills. Minneapolis Public Library 338.4 678.

History of Hennepin County. Warner. North Star Publishing, 1881.

Kane, Lucile. The Waterfall that Built a City. St. Paul; Minnesota Historical Society.

Steen, Herman. Flour Milling in America. Minneapolis Public Library, 338.1 S81.

Storcke, John and Walter D. Teague. Flour for Man's Bread: A History of Milling. Minneapolis Public Library, 679.0 S88.

2. Publications:

Ellsworth, Linda. The History of a House, How to Trace it. Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1976, Technical Leaflet no. 89.

History Procedures Manual. Historic American Buildings Survey. Washington: National Parks Service, 1983.

3. Miscellaneous:

Building Inspector's Office. Minneapolis, Minnesota-Building Permits.

"Milling District History and Source Data." Dunwiddie Office Research Files, private collection.

Minnesota Historical Society Audio-Visual Library-Photograph Collection.

F. Research Calendars

- G. Original Architectural Drawings: Architectural drawings for the original building were not found. However, plans of 1898 and 1928 additions and alterations to this building were recorded on reproducible drawings of the original plans. 1898 plans were in the files of the General Mills Archives and 1928 plans were found in the Washburn "A" Mill.

Prepared by:
Gary Anderson,
Patricia Anderson,
Kevin Donahue, and
Lisa McNelis
University of Minnesota
March 1986

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was prepared as a class project for Architecture 5142, Historical Building Research and Documentation, a class offered in the School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota. The class project was prepared under the direction of Professor Foster W. Dunwiddie in cooperation with the State Historic Preservation Office of the Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul, Minnesota. Historical data was compiled by Gary Anderson, Patricia Anderson, Kevin Donahue and Lisa McNelis, University of Minnesota, March 1986.